

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) spoke on the House Floor today to honor the life and legacy of Governor William Donald Schaefer, who passed away on April 18th. Below are his remarks as prepared for delivery:

“I rise to honor the legacy of Maryland’s Governor William Donald Schaefer, who died on April 18th after a long life of public service.

“William Donald Schaefer was one of the great American mayors. Few mayors can ever say that they transformed a city as thoroughly as he did. But over his 16-year tenure as mayor of Baltimore, he led a dramatic and historic turnaround. In 1971, when his mayoralty started, Baltimore was a deeply struggling city: a city plagued by population flight, crime, and a decaying urban infrastructure. When so many had given up on Baltimore, Mayor Schaefer made it his mission to stand up to that decay. And we can still see his legacy today: it is a legacy that includes physical landmarks like Camden Yards, the National Aquarium, Baltimore’s Harborplace, and an outstanding light rail system, projects that he saw through to completion as both mayor and governor.

“Just as importantly, Mayor Schaefer’s legacy came in thousands of gestures that showed just how deeply he cared about the people he represented, and how seriously he took his work: personally addressing illegal dumping in alleys or broken equipment at parks, driving through the city at night on the lookout for everything from potholes to crime trouble spots, and even jumping into the Aquarium’s seal pool—complete with a rubber ducky—when the city failed to complete the Aquarium on time. Above all, his colorful, passionate, and dedicated leadership added up to a change not just in Baltimore’s appearance and infrastructure, but in its mindset. In the words of the Baltimore Sun he ‘changed the way the city felt about itself.’

“He brought that same dedication to his two terms as Maryland’s governor. His trademark no-nonsense style was on display in Annapolis, where he pursued an agenda focused on job creation, strengthening Maryland’s schools—which now rank as the nation’s best—and protecting Maryland’s natural heritage, including our beloved Chesapeake. After reaching the highest point in Maryland politics, many would have ridden off into the sunset. But William Donald Schaefer couldn’t get enough of the work he loved: he ran for state comptroller and won

twice. In his last job, he was one of our state's most respected voices for fiscal responsibility.

“Before he died, Governor Schaefer was asked how he'd like to be remembered. He answered: ‘There are two words: ‘He cared.’ People mock me and make fun of it. But it's the truth.’ It is the truth—and it mattered because, at a time when so many wrote off our cities, caring took remarkable courage and strength.

“A great architect was once laid to rest in a building he himself had designed. His tombstone read: ‘If you seek his monument—look around you.’ Those words apply just as well to William Donald Schaefer, and I hope that the people he served will bear them in mind whenever they enjoy the best that the city of Baltimore and our state of Maryland have to offer.”